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Congressman Dent urges legislation to limit Indian gambling expansion

WASHINGTON, D.C. — As Congress prepares to begin its 2006 session, U.S. Rep. Charlie Dent is urging consideration of his bill to limit expansion of Indian casinos.

Dent introduced H.R. 3431, a bill to amend the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, on July 26, 2005. Specifically, the bill would:

- Prevent Indian tribes from making land claims on property that is not contiguous to their own reservation with the intent of introducing gambling there
- Give a state Legislature the power, as a state governor already has, to overturn a U.S. Department of Interior decision to award a land grant in trust to an Indian tribe

Congressman Dent proposed the bill because an Oklahoma-based tribe made a contentious land claim against more than 25 homeowners and businesses in Forks Township, Northampton County, with plans to build a casino.

The Forks Township land claim has since been rejected in federal court, but Dent seeks to protect landowners from costly lawsuits and possible clouds over their deeds. The bill has 9 co-sponsors to date.

“I consider this a good government bill,” Congressman Dent said. “In addition to peace of mind for homeowners, it cuts down opportunity for graft and corruption. I’d point out the \$19 billion Indian casino industry is at the center of the Jack Abramoff lobbying scandal.”

Dent is also co-sponsor of a bill by U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers (MI-8) — H.R. 2353, the Common Sense Indian Gambling Reform Act. Rogers is a co-sponsor of Dent’s legislation.

Both proposals address the problem of Indian tribes seeking land not contiguous to their reservations to build casinos.

“I am concerned about this kind of ‘reservation shopping,’ ” Congressman Dent said. “Indian tribes should retain the right of pursuing legitimate land claims. But we must address this abuse of the law and the legal system.”

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